

Hepatitis C is caused by the hepatitis C virus (HCV)

U.S. Statistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Estimated 17,000 new infections in 2007 → Estimated 3.2 million people are living with chronic HCV infection
Routes of Transmission	<p>Contact with blood of an infected person, primarily through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Sharing or contaminated needles, syringes, or other injection drug equipment <p>Less commonly spread through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Sexual contact with an infected person → Birth to an infected mother → Needlestick or other sharp instrument injuries
Persons at Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Current or former injection drug users → Persons born between 1945 and 1965 → HIV-infected persons → Persons with known exposures to HCV (e.g., healthcare workers after needlesticks, recipients of blood or organs from a donor who later tested positive for HCV) → Recipients of clotting factor concentrates before 1987 → Recipients of blood transfusions or donated organs before July 1992 → Long-term hemodialysis patients → Infants born to infected mothers
Incubation Period	Time between exposure and onset of symptoms: 14 to 180 days (average 45 days)
Symptoms of Acute (new) Infection	<p>One or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Abdominal Pain → Vomiting → Fever → Gray-colored bowel movements → Fatigue → Joint pain → Loss of appetite → Jaundice → Nausea
Likelihood of Symptoms	20-30% of newly infected persons develop symptoms of acute disease
Potential for Chronic Infection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → 75-85% of newly infected persons develop chronic infection → 15-25% of newly infected person clear the virus
Severity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Acute illness is uncommon. Those who do develop acute illness recover with no lasting liver damage. → 60%–70% of chronically infected persons develop chronic liver disease → 5%–20% develop cirrhosis over a period of 20–30 years → 1%–5% will die from cirrhosis or liver cancer → Estimated 12,000 persons in the U.S. die from HCV-related illness per year
Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Acute: Antiviral and supportive treatment → Chronic: Regular monitoring for signs of liver disease progression; some patients are treated with antiviral drugs
Vaccination Recommendations	<p>There is no vaccine available for hepatitis C.</p> <p>IMPORTANT: PATIENTS WITH HEPATITIS C SHOULD BE VACCINATED AGAINST HEPATITIS A AND B TO PREVENT FURTHER LIVER DAMAGE</p>